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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkish Parliament to Hold First Round of Presidential Election
All papers report the Turkish parliament is to convene Monday at 3.00 PM for the first round of voting for the country's new president. The first and second rounds of voting require 367 (two-thirds of the 550 MPs) votes to elect the new president whereas in the third round, a simple majority of 276 votes will suffice. Since Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan is not allowed to vote, the AKP has 340 votes and Gul therefore needs 27 more votes from other parties or independent lawmakers. Gul is expected to be elected in the third round of voting, August 28. On the same day, President Sezer will hand over the presidential post to Gul, and on the next day, Gul is expected to approve the government list to be submitted by Prime Minister Erdogan.

In today's voting, there will three tow candidates in addition to Gul. The nationalist MHP has nominated Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, a former defense minister now MP from the Kayseri province, and the left-leaning DSP has nominated its Eskisehir MP Tayfun Icli. Ufak Uras, the leftist Freedom and Solidarity Party (ODP) chairman, said he will participate in the parliamentary session but will not vote for Gul. Muhsin Yazicioglu, leader of the Islamist-nationalist Grand Unity Party (BBP) said he will cast his vote in favor of Gul. The main opposition CHP has not nominated any presidential candidate and declared it will not take part in the vote. Kurdish party DTP is not expected to support Gul since acting chairman Nurettin Demirtas said over the weekend after a meeting with the AKP candidate that the DTP was not satisfied with the messages issued by Gul with regard to the Kurdish issue.

Editorial Commentary on US-EU Expectations of Turkish Presidential Election

Washington-based Yasemin Congar writes in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "The outside world, including the US and the EU are closely watching the developments in Turkey -- the election

aftermath and presidency process. What they see is a country with a state mechanism falling behind people's demands, and a top-level force resistant against progress. The events of both April 27 [military warning] and July 22 [general elections] have made this conclusion crystal clear, by clearly showing the differences between the people's will and the pro-status quo front. The old-fashioned practices of the Turkish state are not meeting the people's expectations. American officials as well as EU diplomats hope to see a strong continuity in reforms and efforts toward a civilian constitution during Abdullah Gul's term as president. They hope that the AKP government will use its election victory power to establish political consensus for reforms. Those reforms should be strong enough so that fears about secularism or nationalism are marginalized."

Washington-based Ali Aslan writes in the Islamist-oriented daily Zaman: "Some observers find the US administration's stance on issues such as the military warning, the elections aftermath and the presidential election process as extremely cautious and incompetent.

Those observers, including some retired ambassadors, believe that it is in the US interest to make a strong commitment to the rising trend toward democracy in Turkey. It seems the problem stems from the fact the US is not yet very clear on who is the winner of the Turkish political game. Probably that's the reason for the State Department to issue technically cautious statements regarding Abdullah Gul's candidacy. Another reason is that the US does not want to be seen as interfering Turkey's domestic affairs. Many Americans I spoke with hope to see the new Turkish president engaging more in international relations using his skills from his Foreign Ministry days. When Gul is elected as president, it is also hoped that he will be more of a rationalist and realist than Sezer was, especially on some controversial matters, such as inviting Talabani to Turkey. There are many pending foreign policy issues

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before Turkey and the US, with Iraq and Iran being the priority. We should move on these right after the conclusion of presidential process."

Paper: US-Turkey Special Anti-Terror Envoy Mechanism a "Fiasco"
Liberal Radikal reports on page one that an unidentified security source said that despite the rise in the PKK attacks, the Turkish and US envoys for countering the PKK terrorism have not met since the retirement of the Turkish envoy Edip Baser. Diplomatic sources say that so far Rafet Akgunay, Baser's replacement, and Ralston have held only one phone conversation. The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) has sent Ralston two letters detailing Turkish demands and complaints to no avail. Washington is disappointed with the counter-terrorism mechanism, and diplomatic sources believe Joseph Ralston might also quit. In addition, the report says that Turkey is not expected to replace its special Iraq envoy Ambassador Oguz Celikkol when his mandate expires at the end of this year, according to Radikal.

Turkey-Iran Natural Gas Cooperation

Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Vatan, Bugun and others: Papers report that Energy Minister Hilmi Guler met with his Iranian counterpart Perviz Fettaf and Iran's acting oil minister Gholam Hussein Nozari at the weekend to finalize an agreement with Tehran on natural gas cooperation. Mainstream Milliyet and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet say that Turkey agreed to increase the cooperation on natural gas with Iran despite the objections from the United States. Nozari said, with this agreement, Turkey will allow Iran to use its territory to transfer Iranian gas to Europe and in return, Iran will let Turkmenistan gas flow to Turkey via an Iranian pipeline. Milliyet reports that this agreement also enables Turkey to import six billion Kwh of electricity from Iran.

Turkey to Produce Unmanned Helicopters

The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports Turkish military is to kick off production of "unmanned helicopters" which have a 15 km range and fly at an altitude of 10,000 feet, transmitting audio and video footage between 500-1,000 feet. The entirely Turkish-made "Malazgirt" helicopters will be able to take off vertically and land in all kinds of terrain. The Turkish Aerospace Industry (TAI) has also been working on the production of unmanned aircraft which can

fly up to 30,000 feet, according to the paper.

Halacoglu: Kurds Have Turkmen, Armenian Roots

Liberal Radikal reports Turkish History Association Chairman Professor Yusuf Halacoglu told a symposium in Kayseri over the weekend that the Kurds in Turkey were of Turkmen descent and that Kurdish Alevi were of Armenian descent, basing his claim on the Ottoman deeds in the 16th century. "About 30 percent of those who deem themselves Kurd actually have Turkmen origins, and those who are known as Kurdish Alevi in Tunceli and Sivas have converted from their Armenian-Christian roots," said Halacoglu. Kurdish party DTP and Alevi organizations in Turkey strongly reacted to Halacoglu's remarks, saying such "racist" statements would be harmful to domestic peace.

Atlas Air Hijacking

All papers: The two hijackers who had attempted to hijack an Atlas air plane traveling from Lefkosa to Istanbul on Saturday, wanted to go to Iran to join the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization in Afghanistan, reports mainstream Hurriyet. Mainstream papers Sabah and Milliyet report that during his interrogation, the Palestinian origin hijacker [some outlets report he was Egyptian] Mommen Abdulaziz Talikh said that he had received training in al-Qaeda camps and was jailed together in Saudi Arabia with a terrorist - code name Ahmet - who was one of the organizers of 9/11 terrorist attack. Turkish hijacker Mehmet Resat Ozlu who was working as a waiter in a hotel in Northern Cyprus, met with Talikh about a year ago and for the last month they had shared a house, adds Milliyet.

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TV News:

(NTV, 6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The ongoing repair and support of the bridges and viaducts in Istanbul, an earthquake-prone city of over 10 million, will be completed in 2010.
- One PKK terrorist has been killed in security operations in Hakkari. PKK terrorists killed a gendarme in the province of Osmaniye.
- A pro-PKK group of 20 masked militants set to fire two commuter buses in the Gazi neighborhood in Istanbul.
- Forty people were killed in traffic accidents across Turkey on Sunday.

International News

- Senior military commanders have told the British government that Britain can achieve "nothing more" in southeast Iraq, and that the 5,500 British troops still deployed there should be withdrawn without delay.
- The OSCE said on Sunday Kazakhstan's parliamentary election was an improvement on previous votes but still failed to meet international standards.
- A spokeswoman for President Bush said White House Press Secretary Tony Snow plans to leave his job before the end of the Bush administration in January 2009 because of financial concerns.
- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez denied rumors circulating on the Internet that Fidel Castro had died.

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